

A COMPARISON OF THE PROFILE OF IOWA  
SUPERINTENDENTS WITH THAT OF THE  
AASA NATIONAL STUDY

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
The School of Graduate Studies  
Drake University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

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by  
Thomas D. Engler  
December 1983

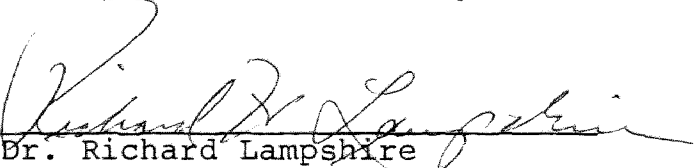
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An abstract of a Dissertation by  
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The problem. The problem of this study was to compare a profile of Iowa school superintendents with a study done by the American Association of School Administrators nationwide in 1982. This comparison/profile was measured in the spring of 1983.

Procedure. The data were gathered by means of a survey instrument modeled after that used in previous studies conducted by the American Association of School Administrators. The survey was mailed to the superintendents of all 441 public school systems in the state of Iowa and a rate of return realized at 92.1 percent.

Findings. The typical Iowa superintendent is male, forty-nine years of age and holds a Specialist degree from an Iowa university. He began his teaching career at the secondary level (grades 7-12) and moved into an administrative position at age twenty-nine, most likely to a principalship. The average Iowa superintendent felt his graduate training was positive, accepted his first superintendency at age thirty-six, and served in two different districts in 1.3 different states over a period of 13.4 years as a superintendent. He has a one-year contract and feels the "ability to see the whole picture" and a knowledge of public relations are important areas of preparation for the job. He is a Republican, makes between \$36,000 and \$40,999 per year, sees the job as stressful but is planning to stay on as a superintendent until retirement.

In general, the Iowa superintendency reflects a strong similarity to that of its counterpart nationwide in personal and professional characteristics according to the comparisons found between this study and the current 1982 AASA survey. The similarities are especially strong in the areas of age, sex, background/experience and personal/professional concerns. The close similarities suggest that the profession itself is becoming a recognizable force in education and that superintendents nationwide are quite similar, professionally and personally to Iowa's superintendents.

Recommendations. This study should be repeated on a regular basis with the interval not greater than five years. Only through this approach can trends and changes in Iowa's public school superintendency and those who occupy it be discerned.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Iowa has long been recognized as outstanding in the field of education. Academically, the public schools have been praised for producing students who generally rank above the national norms in the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills and the Iowa Tests of Educational Development. Parent and societal expectations are such that a high academic level of student achievement is virtually demanded. Hence, Iowa school administrators have the great challenge of meeting the needs of students and the expectations of parents.

The superintendent of schools is the one charged with the task of improving the instructional program. Considered by many to be the hub of educational change, the superintendent holds a position that demands the best of leadership skills, traits, and characteristics. Thus, current information about these leadership areas are necessary if those individuals are to be effective superintendents.

Keidel, in his study of Michigan superintendents stated:

ironically the temper of our times calls for the superintendents to at once be a student of his profession and subject to be studied.



Thus, appraisal of the characteristics and qualifications of superintendents should be an ongoing task if the superintendency is to be a prime source of authority and influence in education.<sup>1</sup>

Today, the public school superintendent is faced with shrinking resources and increased demands that require even more effective management of the school system than in the past. To be of assistance to these leaders, information about superintendents' roles, characteristics, qualifications, and their concerns must be researched and made available to them.

The superintendents of the public schools in the state of Iowa are in leadership positions and the general public depends upon them to administer the school systems in an effective and concerned manner. With a public that is becoming increasingly involved in the operation of tax-generated institutions, such as the public schools, the importance of having competent and sensitive leaders is paramount.

#### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to compare a profile of the Iowa public school superintendent with that of the American Association of School Administrators' (AASA) national study of the superintendency. To assist in

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<sup>1</sup>G. Keidel, Jr., A Profile of Public School Superintendents of the State of Michigan (ERIC ED 781 078).

obtaining information appropriate to this research, the two following questions needed to be answered:

1. What are the personal and professional characteristics of the public school superintendent in the state of Iowa?
2. Is there a difference between the AASA's national profile of superintendents and that of the superintendents of Iowa?

### Rationale

A statement of purpose from the 1923 study of the superintendency by the National Education Association (NEA) also emphasized the need to develop current information about key leaders in education if judgments are to be made concerning the course of education in Iowa. The study made the following point:

To determine wisely what measures should be taken to improve the professional status of the position of superintendent of schools, it is of first importance that information regarding his present status be gathered. Upon this information, as a basis, a program for improvement can be built.<sup>1</sup>

The superintendent of schools was described in the 1980-81 Iowa School Board Association (IASB) publication The Iowa School Board Member: A Guide to Better Boardmanship as the educational leader within the community.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>National Education Association, Department of the Superintendence, The Status of the Superintendence, First Yearbook (Washington, D.C.: The Department, 1923), p. 64.

<sup>2</sup>Iowa School Board Association, The Iowa School Board Member: A Guide to Better Boardmanship, 1980-81 (Des Moines, IA: Iowa School Board Association, January, 1981), p. 40.

Charles Fowler, in his American School Board Journal article stated that: "The superintendent of schools is the key individual in any community's educational program."<sup>1</sup> These assessments, and those of countless other observers of the educational scene, indicate the importance of school superintendents as leaders in educational trends and practices.

If, as Bradford believed, that "superintendents are shapers of young lives,"<sup>2</sup> then studies that expand the body of knowledge regarding the makeup, opinions, and job requirements of the professional superintendent have much value. With the "turnover" of superintendents continuing to be a problem as indicated in the 1982 AASA study,<sup>3</sup> it is important to have available information that will help the Iowa public school superintendents in appraising their own preparation, opinions, practices, and professional characteristics.

Boards of education, both on a statewide and local basis, have a vested interest in knowing better the people in whom they have entrusted administrative authority. With

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Fowler, "When Superintendents Fail," The American School Board Journal, 164 (February 1977), 21.

<sup>2</sup>American School Board Journal, "The Old Superintendents: Candidates for Sainthood," The American School Board Journal, 163 (August 1976), 25.

<sup>3</sup>American Association of School Administrators, The American School Superintendency 1982 (Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators, 1982).

the public calling for more accountability in its schools, boards must utilize all the information at their disposal to help them gain an understanding of the people who serve as chief executives of the public schools in the state of Iowa.

Finally, this study may provide such information as will assist colleges and universities in the evaluation of their present administrative preparatory programs and the development of future programs for administrators. The educational level of the superintendents has risen significantly in recent years and shows no indication of a reversal. It is the responsibility of colleges and universities that offer graduate level administration programs to be sure they keep pace with current needs and effective administrative practices in the development of course content.

#### Organization of the Study

This dissertation is ordered as follows: Chapter One--Introduction; Chapter Two--Review of Related Literature and Research of the Superintendency; Chapter Three--Design of the Study; Chapter Four--Presentation and Analysis of the Data; Chapter Five--Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Review of Related Literature and Research of the Superintendency

#### Historical Origins of the Superintendency

As a preface to the study of the superintendency, it should be noted that the early schools were never without some form of supervision. Lay supervision, ineffective as it will be judged now, was practiced in the absence of trained administrators and was in harmony with the cause of those who desired close local control of their interests. The growth of towns and cities, however, served to reveal the inadequacy of lay supervision. The realization of this by some school boards pointed the way to the development of the superintendency. The transfer of authority, however, was not an easy task.

Having found the supervision of growing school systems an increasingly difficult proposition, school boards were not prepared to admit that their problems could be solved through the appointment of one superintendent. Their skepticism was generated to a degree by the jealousy which is so often associated with those not willing to surrender what they believe to be their inherent rights.

Hence, one witnesses the beginnings of the superintendency

in the somewhat reluctant attempts of early school boards to relinquish authority in the face of growing educational responsibilities.

The first state to create an office to supervise its schools was New York in 1812. In the process of enacting legislation to make provision for state aid to schools, provision was also made for the Office of Superintendent of Common Schools. So far as is known, this is distinctively an American creation uninfluenced by the practice of any other land.<sup>1</sup>

The duties of the superintendent were to look after the maintenance and establishment of schools in the state of New York. However, as Cubberley suggests,<sup>2</sup> by his vigorous work in behalf of schools, the first appointee, Gideon Hawley, gave such offense to the politicians of the time that he was removed from office in 1821, and the legislature then abolished the position and designated the Secretary of State to act, ex officio, as Superintendent. This condition continued until 1854, when the legislature again created the separate office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The first superintendent of city schools was appointed

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<sup>1</sup>Elwood P. Cubberley, The History of Education (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1948), p. 687.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

in Buffalo, New York, in 1837. The slight inroads made by the superintendency at this time may be noted from the fact that by 1870, approximately one city in ten with a population of at least 8,000 had a school superintendent. An indication of the growth from that point on can be gained from the fact that only six years later, more than one-half of the 250 cities with a population of 8,000 or more had engaged school superintendents.

A description of the early development of the superintendency is given by Moehlman in the following:

The mere establishment of the office, while significant, only marked the beginning of a long developmental struggle. Local differences and strong personalities produced many variations. Many of the early incumbents were not even educators. Partisan and spoils politics frequently played a part in their appointment and tenure. In some instances they early became the responsible executive officers of the board of education, and in others, when educators were chosen, they were entrusted with instructional duties only. The pattern of development was not even and certainly not smooth. The nineteenth century marks clearly the emergence of distinctive powers. The position is still in the process of development.<sup>1</sup>

Further discussion on the transfer of authority is to be noted in the following excerpt from the Thirtieth Yearbook of the American Association of School Administrators:

Early superintendents had in part shaped their own jobs, depending upon local conditions, the

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur B. Moehlman, School Administration (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1940), p. 242.

guidance of boards, and their backgrounds, interests, and capacities. They were technically untrained for there were no professional schools for administrators. To varying degrees they inherited from standing committees the school visiting and the functions pertaining to personnel, curriculum, and other educational matters. Business functions were often the last to be delegated. Boards naturally felt more competent in this field than in instruction.<sup>1</sup>

It was not until the latter part of the nineteenth century that the outlines of the superintendency became fairly discernible. With the initial recognition granted the new profession, the twentieth century witnessed a more rapid evolution of the superintendency.

By 1913, every one of the forty-eight states had created as a separate office a superintendency of schools under various titles. The variety of titles is somewhat indicative of duties. In 1925, the following titles were in use: Superintendent of Education, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Commissioner of Education, Superintendent of Schools, Superintendent of Public Schools, and Superintendent of Free Schools.

As different as the functions of the early superintendent may have been, the functions and duties were to become still more numerous as the office began to associate functions with the passing of time. The following description of the growth of the superintendency during the

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<sup>1</sup>American Association of School Administrators, The American School Superintendency Thirtieth Yearbook (Washington, D.C.: The Association, A Department of the National Education Association, 1952), p. 53.



twentieth century merits reproduction:

It was perhaps natural and essential that the first 25 years of the newly fledged superintendency in this century should have emphasized "know how" rather than "know what for." It is equally natural that during the second quarter century, marked as it was by the boom, depression, flaming world conflict, and the tensions of the not-so-cold-war, the purpose of the "what for" of the superintendency should have been stressed in public and professional minds.<sup>1</sup>

### The Need for Profile Studies

This study derived its importance from the belief that the superintendent of schools is the key person in a school district operation and that it is essential to expand the body of knowledge concerning those individuals who fill the position.

In 1952, the AASA commission study described the developing nature of the position of superintendent of schools in this way:

The evolution of the superintendency is not complete. It will never be complete in a free and changing society as long as schools remain free and decentralized. What new form will it take, what new technics and philosophies will develop in the next 100 years, depends upon the functions which are assigned to public schools, but most of all perhaps upon the professional vision, enterprise, statesmanship, and courage of individuals who will comprise the generations of superintendents still to come.<sup>2</sup>

James is concerned about the superintendency and the characteristics and trends of its professionals. He

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 57

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

recommends further study of the superintendency as he stated in his 1981 study:

The past 40 years have witnessed changes in the characteristics, training, and social setting of the school superintendents. A 1939 survey showed that superintendents tended to be male, white, married, Protestant, upwardly mobile, Republican and from non-urban backgrounds. Most held B.A. or M.A. degrees. In the past 40 years superintendents have also had to adjust to four major social changes, including increased family mobility, desegregation conflicts and controversies, conflicts between science and religion and teacher unionism. Further, school business management has become more professional and school boards more democratic. State legislatures, however, have reduced school boards' decision-making powers.<sup>1</sup>

Kaufman, in her report to the National Association of School Boards (NASB) in 1981 stated:

in essence, the professional staff is a reflection and extension of the chief administrator, the superintendent. If the board of education works with and through a knowledgeable and motivated superintendent, the performance of the professional staff will be instrumental in bringing the grasp of realization closer to the reach for achievement. Because the superintendent is so crucial to the performance of the staff and ultimately to the accomplishment of the primary objective of the board of education, the education of children and youth, we should consider this person in some detail.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas H. James, "Educational Administration: A Forty Year Perspective," American Association of Educational Research, Los Angeles, California, April, 1981, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Sandra D. Kaufman, "What Should Your Board Expect from Its Professional Staff?" National Association of School Boards, Dallas, Texas, April 11-14, 1981.

Griffiths summarized the profile of an effective superintendent as an educational leader and philosopher and

a man well above average in intelligence and educational achievement. He should have had the benefit of a fine liberal arts education and had excellent graduate training in administration. It would be well for him to have taught and to have had some administrative experience; but, intelligence, a broad cultural background, and administrative training are probably more valuable. His is a role that requires taking positions on controversial issues. He must be able to withstand the many pressures which will be exerted on him. The need for further study of this person in this position is paramount.<sup>1</sup>

#### National and State Profile Studies

The first nation-wide survey of school superintendents was conducted in 1921-22 and reported in the First Yearbook of the Department of the Superintendence which was published in 1923. This has been followed by five subsequent surveys conducted in 1932, 1950, 1958 and 1982.

There are several significant trends worth reporting in a comparison of the first two studies: it would appear that a larger percentage of superintendents in the 1932 study entered the profession directly from classroom positions than that noted in the initial survey. At the same time it can be noted that a smaller percentage entered the superintendency from either the elementary or the secondary principalship. An indication of the growing professional

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<sup>1</sup>Daniel E. Griffiths, The School Superintendent (New York: The Center for Applied Research in Education, Inc., 1966), p. 105.

tone may be derived from the fact that fewer entered the superintendency from non-school positions and that the average period of service of superintendents had increased two years. It was also revealed that a larger percentage of those reporting to the 1932 survey had been given written contracts for two or more years.

The Eleventh Yearbook gives the following account of the "typical" superintendent in 1932:

The present survey shows the "median" superintendent to be a man of forty-four years of age. He has served twenty-one years in educational work, of which ten have been as superintendent of schools. He entered school teaching in the area in which he now resides. His first superintendency was in a community of 2,500 to 10,000 population. Just before entering the superintendency he was a high school principal. He has had both teaching and administrative experience in elementary and secondary schools. He has been in his present position for six years. His contract is for either one, two or three years.<sup>1</sup>

Another comprehensive survey of superintendents was carried out in 1950 and reported in the Thirtieth Yearbook of the AASA. Separate studies were made of rural-urban superintendents.

In the study of city superintendents, questionnaires were mailed out to 1,220 individuals and a 49.3 percent return was realized. Disappointing as this return might seem, it was the contention of the Yearbook Commission that

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<sup>1</sup>National Education Association, Department of Superintendence, Educational Leadership: Eleventh Yearbook (Washington, D.C.: The Department, 1933), p. 101.

this return is more impressive when one notes that more than 75 percent of the superintendents in cities with a population over 10,000 replied to the questionnaire.

In a summary of personal and professional characteristics of city superintendents, the following characteristics were noted: the median age of city superintendents was found to be forty-nine years; the range of the medians was from forty-eight years in the small cities to fifty-six years in the large cities; it was also noted that the median number of years spent in the field of education for the entire sample was 26.8 years, of this, nearly twelve years were spent in the superintendency; as was anticipated, a large majority of those reporting (85.2 percent) had taught in elementary schools; a lesser number (46.2 percent) had taught in secondary schools; more than 52 percent had entered the superintendency from the high school principalship, while only 9.1 percent had done so through the elementary principalship; nearly one-half of the reporting superintendents indicated that they were holding their second position as superintendent; as far as professional preparation was concerned, 78.7 percent of the city superintendents reported the master's degree, 5.7 percent the Ph.D. degree, and 8.3 percent the Ed.D. degree.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>American Association of School Administrators, The American School Superintendency Thirtieth Yearbook, pp. 282-86.

A brief comparison of rural and urban superintendents from the 1959 survey reveals that rural superintendents were younger, not as well prepared professionally, and had a lesser amount of experience in education and supervision. It can also be noted that considerably fewer rural superintendents entered the superintendency through the principalship.

Among the many interesting findings disclosed in the 1982 AASA survey are the following:

Superintendents in larger districts are older but have spent fewer years in classroom teaching than those in smaller districts.

Career patterns involve teacher to principal to central office in districts above 3,000 student enrollment, whereas in smaller ones, the steps are usually teacher to principal to superintendent.

Findings in regard to superintendent appraisals of their graduate programs will be of interest to persons from higher education. Larger district superintendents hold educational research in higher regard than those from smaller districts. They found courses in administrative theory, philosophy of education, research methods, and systems analysis to be more useful. Smaller district superintendents placed more emphasis on school finance, school law, and other day-to-day management oriented work.

The median age has increased  $5\frac{1}{2}$  years for superintendents from the 1923 study (43.1) to the present (48.7).

The median age for entry into the first superintendency is at its lowest level since such data have been collected (37.1 in 1951 to 34.4 in 1982).

The percent entering the superintendency directly from teaching has fluctuated. It was highest in 1951 (16.0 percent) and lowest in 1960 (4.6 percent), settling at 8.8 percent in 1982.

Salaries seemed to always be of interest to superintendents and school board members. The median salary increased only \$150.00 between 1923 and 1933. On the other hand, the median salary increased by more than \$14,000.00 without controlling for inflation between 1971 and 1982. (1923 = \$3,390.00; 1933 = \$4,050.00; 1971 = \$17,310.00; 1982 = \$31,665.00.)

There has been no increase in the number of female superintendents, even after considerable publicity about the need for more women in this office and substantial increases in the number of females in preparation programs.<sup>1</sup>

A profile study of the school superintendent in Oregon in 1962 found that in many respects the typical superintendent in Oregon was very much like the superintendent characterized in a survey, done by AASA nationwide in 1958, in similarity of views related to professional issues. Social origins of Oregon superintendents were found to be predominately in the blue-collar occupational category with farming noted as the largest contributing factor as background. It also appeared that the early social setting (milieu) of the more successful superintendents was a vital contributing factor in the subsequent development of their administrative peers.<sup>2</sup>

Hair, in a survey of superintendents in Wyoming, described the typical superintendent as follows:

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<sup>1</sup>American Association of School Administrators, The American School Superintendency 1982, pp. 9-95.

<sup>2</sup>William Dushenski, "A Profile of the School Superintendent in Oregon." Diss., Univ. of Oregon, 1962.

He was born in Nebraska and probably did his undergraduate work there with a major in social studies. It is likely that he was a high school teacher of science, later became a principal, and thence advance to superintendent, but probably all of his experience was in the secondary school. He has lived about 17 years in Wyoming and had gone to the University of Wyoming to work on a master's degree in educational administration. He is about 45 years of age and has been a superintendent for eight years.<sup>1</sup>

Carleton, in a study of superintendents in Montana made the following observation:

the typical administrator who participated in this study was in his forties, had been in educational work roughly twenty years, and had been in his present position three years. He was born on a farm or in a small town, located in Montana or one of the surrounding states. He is married and a Protestant. He had secured a Master's degree from Montana State University.<sup>2</sup>

Carleton also pointed out that while 73.7 percent of the administrators had been in the field of education ten or more years, nearly one-half (48.7 percent) had less than ten years of experience. These data apparently were amenable to the interpretation that a large proportion of the administrators had put in many years as teachers before moving into administrative positions. It was also noted by Carleton that 24 percent of the superintendents had less

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<sup>1</sup>D. Hair, Tenure and Turnover of Wyoming Superintendents, Curriculum and Research Center, College of Education (Laramie, WY: University of Wyoming, 1956), pp. 32-33.

<sup>2</sup>L. J. Carleton, "A Study of the Relationship of the Rated Effectiveness of School Administrators and Certain of Their Personality and Personal Background Characteristics," Diss., Univ. of Oregon, 1956, p. 99.



than a master's degree.<sup>1</sup>

A 1968 study of superintendents characteristics and administrative behavior in Iowa concluded that:

Iowa school boards preferred the superintendent of schools to be a 45 year old, white, experienced superintendent. He should be married, a family man, and affiliated with a protestant church, have had seven years of administrative experience and preparation at or beyond the masters degree level. The factor most influential in his selection was his record of administrative experience.<sup>2</sup>

In part two of the question used by Johnson, the boards responded indicating a preference for a superintendent who exhibited mostly democratic behavior in areas of student, staff and patrons and less democratic in areas of finance, leadership and curriculum.

A profile study of superintendents in Louisiana in 1969 by Musemeche<sup>3</sup> and a similar profile of superintendents in Michigan in 1977 by Keidel,<sup>4</sup> had like research motives in identifying the characteristics of the public school superintendents in those states. Both used past AASA

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Lawrence Oliver Johnson, "Superintendents' Characteristics and Administrative Behavior Deemed Desirable by Boards of Education in Iowa Public Schools," Diss., Iowa State Univ., 1969.

<sup>3</sup>Richard A. Musemeche, "A Profile of the School Superintendent in Louisiana," Diss., Univ. of Arkansas, 1969.

<sup>4</sup>Keidel, A Profile of Public School Superintendents.

studies as models, Louisiana the 1960 study and Michigan the 1971 AASA study. Although their surveys were similar, each used different formats to develop their state superintendents profile. The Louisiana study concluded that the typical career line of superintendents in that state followed a pattern of high school teacher and coach, high school principal, supervisor or assistant superintendent and then superintendent. The remainder of the study investigated longevity patterns and graduate work of Louisiana superintendents. Keidel's study in Michigan found the superintendency in that state to be almost exclusively a male profession with the median age of superintendents at forty-two. All but one of the Michigan superintendents surveyed possessed a master's degree with the doctorate becoming very common, particularly in districts in excess of ten thousand students. Most Michigan superintendents and those in the 1971 AASA study planned to remain in the role until retirement.

Morris, studying superintendents' careers in the midwest, theorized that while there appeared to be a general pattern of professional advancement, there were marked deviations from the average picture. There appeared to be consistent relationship, according to Morris, between the many aspects of the career of administrators and the size of the school system administered in the last position. It appeared that the largest superintendencies were held by

administrators whose careers as a group showed the most marked departure from the norm. Morris made further observation in stating that the smallest superintendencies were held by those whose careers also revealed deviation from the average but not so much as those of the largest system.<sup>1</sup>

### Turnover Studies

Included in the literature are several studies relating to the problem of "turnover" in the superintendency. The reasons why superintendencies seem to "turnover" so frequently was researched by Burlingame in 1979. With 1974-75 as the base year, the average years served in each district (100 school districts in Illinois with 499 or fewer students) over a seventeen year span was calculated. Small districts showed the greatest amount of turnover with the typical small district served by four superintendents who served about four years each. The major impetus of the "turnover" was the differences of opinion between the superintendents and boards over how the school should operate.<sup>2</sup>

Morton, in a study of the turnover and training of Missouri superintendents drew the conclusion that, in

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<sup>1</sup>C. C. Morris, "Careers of 554 Public School Superintendents in Eleven Midwest States," Dissertation Abstracts, 17 (1979), p. 2193.

<sup>2</sup>Martin Burlingame, "Win Some, Lose Some: Small Rural District Superintendents," American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, California, April, 1979.

general, the length of the superintendency in Missouri was shorter for former superintendents in smaller systems than in the larger systems. He also noted that the former superintendents who left the profession in the period 1945-1955 were somewhat better prepared professionally than those who remained in the profession.<sup>1</sup>

Somewhat related to this was Holmstedt's study of the tenure of Indiana school administrators. Holmstedt reported that 72 percent of all vacancies in Indiana between 1931 and 1951 were filled by new superintendents while only 28 percent of the vacancies were filled by experienced superintendents.<sup>2</sup>

Also concerned about the apparent increase in turnover of superintendents in recent years, Smith studied 153 school districts with enrollments between 3,000 and 5,000 students. The results showed that superintendents whose attitudes were congruent with those of their communities were more likely to remain in their position. When they do move, superintendents tend to seek positions in more urban districts. It was suggested that the amount of education received by superintendents encourages a liberal outlook

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<sup>1</sup>R. C. Morton, "Turnover and Training of Missouri Superintendents of Schools," Dissertation Abstracts, 16 (1979), 486-87.

<sup>2</sup>C. Holmstedt, "The Tenure of Indiana School Administrators," in C. L. Sharp, "A Family Experiential and Educational Background Study of Superintendents of Schools in Indiana and Some Comparison with Eleven Other Midwestern States," Diss., Indiana Univ., 1959, p. 71.

incompatible with the conservative attitudes of rural communities where superintendents find their first positions. As they move to higher paying jobs in communities with more compatible values, job pressures increase and counteract benefits of attitudinal congruence. Older superintendents display greater conservatism and tend to remain in their positions longer, according to Smith.<sup>1</sup>

### Career Patterns

The road to the superintendency may take on various patterns, but research indicates that the major path is through the principalship. Carlson, in his study of career patterns and performance of superintendents reported that entry into an occupation and movement through an occupational structure, social system, or hierarchy was contingent upon circumstances, skills, attitudes, and among other things acquired. In delineating the experiences and positions previously held by superintendents, Carlson found that nearly always superintendents were likely to have taught and to have held the position of principal.<sup>2</sup>

Career patterns of administrators are discussed by

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<sup>1</sup>Carol M. Smith, "Attitude Congruency and Superintendents' Service: A Modest Relationship," American Association of Educational Research, Los Angeles, California, 1981, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>R. O. Carlson, School Superintendents: Careers and Performance (Columbus, OH: Charles Merrill Co., 1972).

Hemphill in his study of 16,000 secondary school principals. He reported that the most traveled route to the senior high principalship was through the role of secondary teacher and for the junior high school principalship from other administrative positions. Although only 14 percent had been full-time coaches, more than one-half had coached part-time or had been athletic directors.<sup>1</sup>

Austin and Brown's work showed evidence that assistant principals obtained professional advancement within the district where they were employed. Only 5 percent changed communities. Urban assistant principals looked to smaller communities for advancement to principalships or rural superintendencies.<sup>2</sup> Jennings noted that elementary classroom positions represented the best path leading to elementary principalships in Michigan.<sup>3</sup>

McGivney and Haught looked at the structure of the central office and described two groups that probably reflect two types of central office careers. One group headed

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<sup>1</sup>J. K. Hemphill, The Senior High School Principalship: The Study of the Secondary School Principalship (Washington, D.C.: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1965).

<sup>2</sup>D. B. Austin and H. L. Brown, Report of the Assistant Principalship: The Study of the Secondary School Principalship (Washington, D.C.: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1970).

<sup>3</sup>J. M. Jennings, The Elementary School Principalship in Michigan: A Research Study (East Lansing, MI: Michigan Association of Elementary School Principals, 1972).

finances and personnel and exhibited short tenure. The second group headed other school services such as instruction or support services.<sup>1</sup>

Ortiz advocated the identification of central office careers and institutionalized positions.<sup>2</sup> Charters, in his study of Oregon superintendents found two career types:

1. those who considered themselves as school administrators, that is, a principal with additional responsibilities for administering a district, and
2. those who regard themselves as chief executives, that is, a person in charge of the district.<sup>3</sup>

#### Summary

The superintendency is, as the researcher found, upon analyzing the volumes of literature available nationwide concerning the position, a viable and worthwhile profession and certainly one worth examining in detail. Thus far, however, little recent research concerning the superintendency in the state of Iowa has been found. This evident vacuum concerning these Iowa leaders in education is the main reason for studying the profiles of Iowa superintendents.

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<sup>1</sup>J. H. McGivney and J. M. Haught, "The Politics of Education: A View from the Perspective of the Central Office Staff," Education Quarterly, 18 (1972), 18-38.

<sup>2</sup>R. K. Ortiz, "Midcareer Socialization of Educational Administrators," Review of Educational Research, 48 (1978), 122-32.

<sup>3</sup>W. W. Charters, In-State Migration of Oregon Superintendents: Base Line Data (Eugene, OR: Center for Advanced Study of Educational Administration, 1972).

## CHAPTER THREE

### Design of the Study

A normative survey was used to gather data for this study. This approach, Best relates, enables the researcher to:

gather data from a relatively large number of cases at a particular time. It is not concerned with characteristics of individuals, it is concerned with the generalized statistics that result when data are abstracted from a number of individual<sub>1</sub> cases. It is essentially cross-sectional.

Van Dalen described the usefulness of this type of study when he said that:

Before much progress can be made in solving problems, men must possess accurate descriptions of the phenomenon with which they work. Hence, the early developments in educational research, as in other fields, have been made in the area of descriptions....Determining the nature of prevailing conditions, practices and attitudes seeking accurate descriptions of activities, objects, processes and persons--it is objective. They depict current status and sometimes identify relationships that exist among phenomena or trends that appear to be developing.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>John W. Best, Research in Education (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1949), p. 107.

<sup>2</sup>Deobold Van Dalen, Understanding Educational Research: An Introduction (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1962), p. 184.



The survey method helped the researcher gather information about the subject as it now exists. While portions of the questionnaire required a subjective response, the researcher feels that this limitation is outweighed by the advantages previously mentioned. Also, the researcher believes that the inherent "professionalism" of the school superintendent brought about accurate and forthright responses.

A printed questionnaire, modeled after the instruments used in previous studies conducted by the American Association of School Administrators was used in this study. The questionnaire was refined and adopted for use after Dr. Richard Lampshire, Chairman of the Department of Education Administration at Drake University, Dr. Lyle Kehm, the Executive Secretary of the Iowa Association of School Administrators, and Dr. Robert J. Krajewski, Head of the Department of School Administration and Personnel Services at the University of Northern Iowa, offered their expert opinions concerning the content validity of each item in the instrument. Their criticisms, suggestions and opinions were used in the development of the questionnaire.

The survey instrument was mailed to the superintendents of all 441 public school systems in the state of Iowa. A follow-up reminder was inserted in the IASA newsletter one month after the questionnaire had been distributed to encourage participation and help to develop a large

representative sample and complete a profile of the public school superintendent in the state of Iowa. The researcher received completed surveys from 403 superintendents with three spoiled surveys for a rate of return of 92.1 percent. In helping to develop a broad picture of the superintendency in the state of Iowa, the questionnaire generated data concerning the personal and professional characteristics, professional preparation and opinion of issues of importance in education today. In addition to analyzing the data generated by the superintendents' responses to the questionnaire, comparisons were made between this study and the last similar study conducted by the AASA to show contrasts and similarities between the national profile of a school superintendent and the Iowa school superintendent.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Presentation and Analysis of the Data

Following mailing of the survey instrument in May, 1983, the researcher received 403 completed responses from superintendents of schools in the state of Iowa. The results were then categorized by student enrollment of the district in which the respondent served as superintendent. The following enrollment categories were established for use after consultation with the research division of the Iowa Department of Public Instruction:

Fewer than 500 students

500 to 999 students

1,000 to 2,999 students

3,000 and above students

Table 1 indicates the number of responses in each of the established school district enrollment categories. One hundred sixty of the 403 responses came from districts of less than 500 students. In 1983, 41.5 percent or 168 districts of the state contained fewer than 500 students. Also, 145 of the 152 superintendents in districts enrolling 500 to 999 students completed the questionnaire. Seventy-two of the eighty superintendents in districts of 1,000 to 2,999 pupils responded. The rate of return was 100 percent

for those superintendents in districts with over 3,000 students. Thus, the responses closely mirrored the student enrollment pattern of the state.

Table 1  
Frequency of Responses by District Size

| District Enrollment | No. of Responses | % of Responses |
|---------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Less than 500       | 160              | 39.7           |
| 500 to 999          | 145              | 35.9           |
| 1,000 to 2,999      | 72               | 17.9           |
| 3,000 and above     | <u>26</u>        | <u>6.5</u>     |
| Total               | 403              | 100.0          |

#### Personal Characteristics

Selected personal characteristics of the respondents were identified through Questions 2 through 5 of the survey instrument. The characteristics were: age, sex, degree earned, and age employed in their first educational-type job.

#### Age

The superintendents ranged in age from under thirty-five to over sixty-five with the mean age forty-nine. Sixty-nine percent of the respondents were over the age of forty-five. As can be seen in Table 2, there seems to be an even split in age for all size districts as 50 percent are age

forty-nine and younger and 50 percent age fifty years and older.

Table 2  
Superintendents' Ages by District Size

| Age of Superintendent | District Size |          |          |          | No. Total % |
|-----------------------|---------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------|
|                       | A             | B        | C        | D        |             |
| Under 35              |               |          | 4        | 7        | 2.7         |
| 35 - 39               | 1             | 3        | 17       | 31       | 12.9        |
| 40 - 44               | 6             | 10       | 25       | 20       | 15.1        |
| 45 - 49               | 3             | 14       | 34       | 27       | 19.4        |
| 50 - 54               | 7             | 17       | 26       | 35       | 21.1        |
| 55 - 59               | 5             | 21       | 26       | 25       | 19.1        |
| 60 - 64               | 3             | 7        | 20       | 15       | 8.7         |
| 65 +                  | <u>1</u>      | <u>0</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>0</u> | <u>1.0</u>  |
| Total                 | 26            | 72       | 145      | 160      | 403/100.0   |

|       |                   |             |
|-------|-------------------|-------------|
| Group | Size (Enrollment) | Mean = 49.0 |
| A     | 3,000 and above   |             |
| B     | 1,000 - 2,999     |             |
| C     | 500 - 999         |             |
| D     | Less than 500     |             |

In comparing the ages of Iowa superintendents with the national profile developed by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the reader can see that the superintendency in Iowa is not really becoming more a

younger man's profession than it was in the 1970 study<sup>1</sup> and Iowa superintendents' mean age of forty-nine compares fairly evenly with the 1982 study conducted by AASA which showed a mean age of 48.0 nationwide.<sup>2</sup> It should be noted, however, that the nationwide median age in 1958 was fifty-one years of age.<sup>3</sup> Previous studies referred to in the 1958 AASA work showed the median age in 1922 was forty-three, in 1932 as forty-four and in 1950 as forty-nine. In summary, the national studies showed an increase in age from forty-three to fifty in a thirty-six-year period. The next twenty-four years showed a decrease in the median age on the national survey to 49.2.

### Sex

As in the past, the superintendency seems to be a "male" dominated profession, with only four female respondents in the survey. The percentage of Iowa superintendents who are males on this survey is 98.86 percent. This can be compared with the 1982 AASA study that showed 98.8 percent

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<sup>1</sup>American Association of School Administrators, The American School Superintendency (Washington, D.C.: American Association of School Administrators, 1971), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>American Association of School Administrators, The American School Superintendency 1982 (Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators, 1982), p. 16.

<sup>3</sup>American Association of School Administrators, The American School Superintendency, p. 13.

of the superintendencies being held by males.<sup>1</sup>

Age: First Job In Education

As a group, 80.6 percent of the superintendents of Iowa's public school districts accepted their first full-time position in education between the ages of twenty and twenty-five, with the mean being twenty-three and the range extending from age eighteen to age forty-three. The mode, or most frequently cited starting age, was twenty-two. In addition, 97.0 percent of the superintendents accepted their first position in education by the age of twenty-nine. The AASA national study (24.4 percent) in 1970 and the researcher's 1983 study (23.0 percent) showed over a full year's difference in the mean.

As seen in Table 3, there do not seem to be any significant differences in starting ages between superintendents who hold positions in districts of differing size (enrollment).

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<sup>1</sup>American Association of School Administrators, The American School Superintendency 1982, p. 75.

Table 3

Age: First Job in Education by District Size

| Age          | District Size          |          |          |          | No. Total % |
|--------------|------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------|
|              | A                      | B        | C        | D        |             |
| Under 20     | 0                      | 0        | 3        | 1        | 1.0         |
| 20 - 21      | 7                      | 16       | 19       | 28       | 17.4        |
| 22 - 23      | 9                      | 24       | 58       | 49       | 34.7        |
| 24 - 25      | 7                      | 21       | 36       | 51       | 28.5        |
| 26 - 27      | 3                      | 8        | 18       | 12       | 10.2        |
| 28 - 29      | 0                      | 2        | 7        | 14       | 5.7         |
| 30 - 34      | 0                      | 2        | 4        | 2        | 1.9         |
| 35 - 39      | 0                      | 0        | 0        | 2        | 0.5         |
| 40 and above | <u>0</u>               | <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> | <u>1</u> | <u>0.5</u>  |
| Total        | 26                     | 72       | 145      | 160      | 403/100.0   |
| Group        | Size                   |          |          |          | Mean = 23   |
| A            | 3,000 and above pupils |          |          |          |             |
| B            | 1,000 - 2,999 pupils   |          |          |          |             |
| C            | 500 - 999 pupils       |          |          |          |             |
| D            | Less than 500 pupils   |          |          |          |             |

Highest Earned Degree

As was expected, the majority of the superintendents, 66 percent, earned their highest degree from an institution located in Iowa with Nebraska second at 9.9 percent. In other responses, no other state had such large percentage responses on the questionnaire. As was also expected, every superintendent possessed at least a Master's degree with the



Specialist degree being held by over one-half of the respondents. As can be seen in Table 4, 18.9 percent of the superintendents have their earned doctorates, and the larger the district the larger the percentage of superintendents with the doctorate degree.

Table 4  
Highest Earned Degrees by District Size

| Degree     | Size of Current Superintendency |                     |                       |                | Total %     |
|------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------|
|            | Less than 500 Pupils %          | 500 to 999 Pupils % | 1000 to 2999 Pupils % | 3000 & Above % |             |
| Masters    | 27.5                            | 27.6                | 19.4                  | 19.2           | 25.5        |
| Specialist | 65.0                            | 56.5                | 45.8                  | 19.2           | 55.6        |
| Doctorate  | <u>7.5</u>                      | <u>15.9</u>         | <u>34.8</u>           | <u>61.5</u>    | <u>18.9</u> |
| Total      | 100.0                           | 100.0               | 100.0                 | 100.0          | 100.0       |

#### Professional Characteristics

Selected professional characteristics of the respondents were identified in Questions 6 through 19. These professional characteristics were: first full-time position in education; age of the superintendents first full-time administrative position in education; the type of administrative position as their (superintendents) first; the superintendents' age at the time of their first superintendency; how many years as a superintendent; how many different states they have served as superintendents; the K-12 enrollment of the

district in their first superintendency; the length of their present contract; considerations of their position as superintendent; opinions of preparation for the superintendency as to importance; degree of stress; future plans; political preference; current salary and major issues.

#### First Full-Time Position in Education

The superintendents were asked to indicate the grade level of their first full-time position in education selecting one of the following three choices: elementary, secondary, or other. Similarities exist between these findings and the results of a similar question in the national survey conducted by AASA in 1971. In 1971, 22.8 percent of the nation's superintendents held their first full-time position in grades one through six while 63.4 percent were employed at the secondary level and 13.8 percent in other positions.<sup>1</sup> As Table 5 indicates, Iowa's superintendents in 1983 also tended to come from its secondary schools, as 84.6 percent of the group took their initial job in public education in grades seven through twelve. Only 8.4 percent got their start in elementary schools while 3.7 percent held a job which fell into the "other" category (mostly--not a specific grade level responsibility in a K-12 district). There was no similar question on the 1982 AASA questionnaire

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<sup>1</sup>American Association of School Administrators, The American School Superintendency.

dealing with the superintendents' first full-time position in education.

Table 5  
First Full-Time Position in Education Held by  
Superintendents by District Size

| Type<br>Position | Pupil Size of Current Superintendency |                           |                             |                      | Total<br>% |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|------------|
|                  | Less than<br>500 Pupils<br>%          | 500 to<br>999 Pupils<br>% | 1000 to<br>2999 Pupils<br>% | 3000 &<br>Above<br>% |            |
| Elementary       | 5.0                                   | 11.7                      | 9.7                         | 7.7                  | 8.4        |
| Secondary        | 90.6                                  | 86.2                      | 86.1                        | 84.6                 | 87.8       |
| Other            | <u>4.4</u>                            | <u>2.1</u>                | <u>4.2</u>                  | <u>7.7</u>           | <u>3.8</u> |
| Total            | 100.0                                 | 100.0                     | 100.0                       | 100.0                | 100.0      |

#### First Full-Time Administrative Position

Responses to the question regarding the age when superintendents were first appointed to administrative or supervisory positions revealed no significant difference in age in comparison to district size. The mean age for all categories was 29.0. The youngest age was twenty-three and the oldest fifty-two. As indicated in Table 6, the mean ages for starting administrative work in the four enrollment categories were as follows: 30.9 (less than 500 pupils), 27.1 (500 to 999 pupils), 29.9 (1,000 to 2,999 pupils), and 28.1 (3,000 and above pupils).

Table 6  
District Enrollment by Age at Entering First  
Administrative Position

| District Enrollment | Age Range      | Mean Age    |
|---------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Less than 500       | 24 - 52        | 30.9        |
| 500 to 999          | 24 - 46        | 27.1        |
| 1,000 to 2,999      | 25 - 43        | 29.9        |
| 3,000 and above     | <u>23 - 41</u> | <u>28.1</u> |
| Total               | 23 - 52        | 29.0        |

The second question dealing with the superintendents' initial positions was: What type of administrative position of those listed below was your first? Assistant Principal, Principal, Supervisor, Director, Assistant Superintendent, Superintendent, or Other. Just as superintendents reported nationwide in the 1970 AASA study, the vast majority, 69.6 percent of Iowa's superintendents began their administrative careers as building principals.<sup>1</sup> The AASA figure was 59.1 percent in 1971. The 1982 AASA study figure for this question was 55.7, somewhat fewer than ten years ago but most still start in that position.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>American Association of School Administrators, The American School Superintendency, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 19-20.

Ranking second as the most common "entry position" was that of Superintendent. This was a surprise to the author as 15.9 percent of the respondents moved directly into the superintendency without first holding any other administrative posts. Some of the "other" positions mentioned were: Business Manager, Vocational Coordinator, Title I Coordinator, Administrative Assistant, and Music Coordinator K-12.

Table 7 summarized the data from all student enrollment categories regarding the nature of the superintendents' initial administrative position.

Table 7

## Nature of First Administrative Position by District Size

| Position                    | Pupil Size of Current Superintendency |                    |                      |                      | Total<br>% |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------|
|                             | Less than<br>500<br>%                 | 500 to<br>999<br>% | 1000 to<br>2999<br>% | 3000 &<br>Above<br>% |            |
| Assistant<br>Principal      | 6.9                                   | 11.0               | 5.6                  | 19.3                 | 8.9        |
| Principal                   | 72.5                                  | 75.2               | 58.2                 | 50.0                 | 69.6       |
| Supervisor                  | 0.0                                   | 0.7                | 0.0                  | 0.0                  | 0.2        |
| Director                    | 0.6                                   | 0.0                | 2.8                  | 3.8                  | 1.0        |
| Assistant<br>Superintendent | 0.0                                   | 0.1                | 5.6                  | 7.7                  | 1.9        |
| Superintendent              | 15.6                                  | 10.3               | 27.8                 | 11.5                 | 15.9       |
| Other                       | <u>4.4</u>                            | <u>0.7</u>         | <u>0.0</u>           | <u>7.7</u>           | <u>2.5</u> |
| Total                       | 100.0                                 | 100.0              | 100.0                | 100.0                | 100.0      |

### Age: First Superintendency

In 1983, the practicing superintendent in Iowa accepted his first superintendency, on the average, at age thirty-six. This came approximately seven years after the acceptance of his/her first administrative position. This figure is almost identical to that shown in the AASA study of 1971.<sup>1</sup> The 1982 AASA study had a mean age of 35.2.<sup>2</sup>

There was very little overall variance when the state was analyzed by student enrollment categories. As indicated by Table 8, over 88 percent had accepted their first superintendency by the age of forty-two.

### Size of First Superintendency

The size of the school district to which the superintendent was first appointed, as measured by student enrollment, varied considerably when the responses were analyzed by the current enrollment categories (Table 9). The mean enrollment in that first job ranged from 394 students in the "less than 500" student category to 3,442 students in the "3,000 and Above" student category. The total sample mean enrollment was 1,308.

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<sup>1</sup>American Association of School Administrators, The American School Superintendency, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup>American Association of School Administrators, The American School Superintendency 1982, p. 20.

Table 8

Age: First Superintendency by District Size

| Age      | District Size |            |            |            | Total (%)  |
|----------|---------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
|          | A(%)          | B(%)       | C(%)       | D(%)       |            |
| Under 27 | 15.4          | 13.9       | 6.9        | 5.63       | 8.3        |
| 28 - 32  | 30.8          | 43.1       | 31.0       | 31.9       | 33.5       |
| 33 - 37  | 23.1          | 27.8       | 35.9       | 28.7       | 30.8       |
| 38 - 42  | 11.5          | 5.6        | 17.9       | 19.4       | 15.9       |
| 43 - 47  | 3.8           | 8.3        | 8.3        | 10.0       | 8.7        |
| 48 - 52  | 15.4          | 1.4        | 0.0        | 3.75       | 2.7        |
| Above 52 | <u>0.0</u>    | <u>0.0</u> | <u>0.0</u> | <u>0.6</u> | <u>0.2</u> |
| Total    | 100.0         | 100.0      | 100.0      | 100.0      | 100.0      |

Enrollment Categories: A = 3,000 and Above  
(Pupils) B = 1,000 to 2,999  
C = 500 to 999  
D = Less than 500

Table 9

District Size: First Superintendency

| Present Enrollment | Mean Size |
|--------------------|-----------|
| Less than 500      | 394       |
| 500 to 999         | 547       |
| 1,000 to 2,999     | 850       |
| 3,000 and Above    | 3,442     |
| Mean = 1,308.2     |           |

Number of School Districts Served, Years  
as a Superintendent, and Different States  
Served by Superintendents

The average superintendent in Iowa public schools in 1983 does not seem to have been a very mobile individual. The superintendents surveyed served an average of 2.27 school districts over a period of thirteen years in 1.3 different states as indicated in Table 10. These figures challenge somewhat the theory of the mobility of superintendents. The vast majority of the state's school superintendents have worked in three or fewer districts with the bulk of those in either one or two school districts.

Table 10

Size of School District and Superintendent Mobility

| District<br>Enrollment | Number of<br>Districts<br>Served | Total<br>Number of<br>Years as Supt. | Number of<br>Different<br>States Served |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Less than 500          | 1.89                             | 10.9                                 | 1.3                                     |
| 500 to 999             | 1.90                             | 12.8                                 | 1.1                                     |
| 1,000 to 2,999         | 2.90                             | 15.5                                 | 1.3                                     |
| 3,000 and above        | 2.40                             | 14.6                                 | 1.3                                     |
| Mean                   | 2.27                             | 13.4                                 | 1.3                                     |

Years in Present Superintendency

Again, the information received in this Iowa survey challenges the notion that "turnover" of superintendencies



are frequent. Iowa superintendents in 1983 held their present superintendencies an average of 8.2 years as a group. The range was from one year to twenty-four years in their present position. There appeared to be a more stabilized group, however, when analyzing this question according to enrollment categories. The category of 500 to 999 pupils had a mean of 9.0 years in their present superintendency which may mean this size of district is more conducive to longevity for public school superintendents in Iowa (Table 11).

Table 11

## District Size by Years in Present Superintendency

| Present District Enrollment (Pupils) | Years |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| Less than 500                        | 7.5   |
| 500 to 999                           | 9.0   |
| 1,000 to 2,999                       | 8.6   |
| 3,000 and above                      | 7.7   |
| Mean for all groups                  | 8.2   |

Length of Present Contract

The most common length of contract for superintendents in Iowa was one year. Over 49 percent of the superintendents responding to the survey had a contract for one year. The reader should be reminded that the current Iowa law limits

contracts for superintendents to a maximum of three years. Only 12.9 percent of the superintendents had a two-year contract while 37.2 percent had a three-year contract. This applied to all student enrollment categories and in one group of districts, the "less than 500" student classification, 66.9 percent had a one-year contract. The most obvious difference between district classifications on this question was that the larger two district classifications had a large majority of the superintendents with three-year contracts. The respondents were asked to check the length, in years, of their present contract as one, two or three years. Table 12 shows the data obtained.

Table 12  
Length of Present Contract by District Size

| Length                          | District Size of Current Superintendency |             |             |             | Total %     |
|---------------------------------|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                                 | A(%)                                     | B(%)        | C(%)        | D(%)        |             |
| One Year                        | 23.0                                     | 25.0        | 48.3        | 66.9        | 49.8        |
| Two Years                       | 11.5                                     | 8.3         | 15.2        | 13.1        | 12.9        |
| Three Years                     | <u>65.4</u>                              | <u>66.7</u> | <u>36.5</u> | <u>20.0</u> | <u>37.2</u> |
| Total                           | 100.0                                    | 100.0       | 100.0       | 100.0       | 100.0       |
| Enrollment Categories (Pupils): |  |             |             |             |             |
| A = 3,000 and above             |  |             |             |             |             |
| B = 1,000 to 2,999              |  |             |             |             |             |
| C = 500 to 999                  |  |             |             |             |             |
| D = Less than 500               |  |             |             |             |             |

### Reflection

The respondents were asked the question "If you had to do it all over again would you choose the superintendency as a career?" Eighty-one and four-tenths percent of the superintendents in Iowa surveyed would again choose the superintendency as a career. This result is much higher than the AASA 1982 study nationwide which indicated that a little over 50 percent of those surveyed would again choose the superintendency as a career. The category of "1,000 to 2,999" students was the most positive with 87.5 percent indicating they would do it again as a career. Table 13 displays the results from this question.

Table 13

If You Had to do it All Over Again Would you Choose the  
Superintendency as a Career?

| Response | District Size of Current Superintendency |                           |                             |                                  | Total<br>% |
|----------|--|---------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|------------|
|          | Less than<br>500 Pupils<br>%             | 500 to<br>999 Pupils<br>% | 1000 to<br>2999 Pupils<br>% | 3000 and<br>Above<br>Pupils<br>% |            |
| Yes      | 78.1                                     | 82.8                      | 87.5                        | 76.9                             | 81.4       |
| No       | 21.9                                     | 17.2                      | 12.5                        | 23.1                             | 18.6       |

### Evaluation of Graduate Programs

Each superintendent was asked to respond to the following question: On the whole, how would you evaluate your program of graduate studies as preparation for the

superintendency? As can be seen in Table 14, 70 percent of the Iowa superintendents evaluated their graduate studies as either excellent or very good preparation for the superintendency. Those in the 3,000 and above student category were the most positive with 84.6 percent feeling that way while 53.7 percent of the superintendents in districts of less than 500 students were similarly inclined. Of interest is the fact that the latter group also had the highest percentage of respondents that rated their graduate programs as poor preparation, 4.4 percent. This held true on the 1982 AASA study where superintendents of larger districts held educational preparation in higher regard (excellent/good) than those in smaller districts nationwide.<sup>1</sup> Table 14 summarizes the question dealing with graduate preparation-evaluation.

Table 14  
Perception of Graduate Education by District Size

| Response  | District Size of Current Superintendency |                           |                             |                               | Total<br>% |
|-----------|--|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|
|           | Less than<br>500 Pupils<br>%             | 500 to<br>999 Pupils<br>% | 1000 to<br>2999 Pupils<br>% | 3000 and<br>Above Pupils<br>% |            |
| Excellent | 17.5                                     | 16.5                      | 16.7                        | 26.9                          | 17.6       |
| Very Good | 46.2                                     | 54.5                      | 59.7                        | 57.7                          | 52.4       |
| Fair      | 31.9                                     | 24.8                      | 23.6                        | 15.4                          | 26.8       |
| Poor      | 4.4                                      | 4.2                       | 0.0                         | 0.0                           | 3.2        |

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

### Most Necessary Issues and Experience

After determining that the majority of Iowa superintendents of schools felt positively about the quality of their graduate study, a decision was made to direct attention to the next two questions dealing with areas of study and experience most necessary as preparation for the superintendency. The superintendents were asked to indicate which of five listed areas of preparation (Labor Relations, Finance, Business, Public Relations, Other) they felt was most important. Thirty-nine and one-half percent of the Iowa superintendents agreed that their most important area of preparation for the superintendency was public relations. The enrollment category of "less than 500" students drew the largest response in this area with 49.4 percent of that group choosing public relations. The second most checked area was finance (28.8 percent of respondents checked this area), whereas the "500 to 999" student enrollment group (33.8 percent) and the "1,000 to 2,999" student enrollment group (31.9 percent) each checked this area as their groups' most necessary area of preparation for the superintendency. The largest enrollment group of "3,000 and above" students felt that labor relations was most necessary as 34.6 percent of this group checked this area. On the 1982 AASA survey, superintendents were asked to name two of the primary expectations board members hold for them and 46.4 percent checked human relation skills and 45.2 percent checked financial

knowledge.<sup>1</sup> It would appear that there is some similarity here as superintendents are working under their perceptions of what needs to be an area of concern according to their bosses and what background the superintendents felt were necessary to meet the demands of the job themselves. Other areas of importance are listed and summarized in Table 15.

Question 19 dealt with the superintendents' perceptions of areas of experience as to the degree of importance to meet the requirements of the job of superintendent. All enrollment groups agree (98.5 percent) that the "ability to see the whole picture" was number one in the areas listed in the very essential/important category. "High intelligence" was second with 81.6 percent and the least important category (40.9 percent) was listed by the superintendents as "central office" experience. This could be explained by the relatively few school districts in Iowa that actually employ central office administrators such as assistant superintendents, business managers and the like. The largest enrollment group (3,000 pupils and above) checked "central office" as their third highest category of importance (69.2 percent). Close behind "high intelligence" was a "secondary school administrative experience" as 80.1 percent felt this area was very essential/important. This was not surprising as 87.8 percent of the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

Table 15

## Most Necessary Preparation for the Superintendency by District Size

| Ranked<br>Areas of<br>Concern | Current District Enrollment Categories |                           |                             |                               | Total<br>% |
|-------------------------------|--|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|
|                               | Less than<br>500 Pupils<br>%           | 500 to<br>999 Pupils<br>% | 1000 to<br>2999 Pupils<br>% | 3000 and<br>Above Pupils<br>% |            |
| 1) Public Relations           | 49.4                                   | 31.7                      | 39.0                        | 23.1                          | 39.5       |
| 2) Finance                    | 25.6                                   | 33.8                      | 31.9                        | 11.5                          | 28.8       |
| 3) Other*                     | 7.5                                    | 18.6                      | 13.9                        | 19.3                          | 13.4       |
| 4) Business                   | 10.0                                   | 10.3                      | 5.6                         | 11.5                          | 9.4        |
| 5) Labor Relations            | <u>7.5</u>                             | <u>5.6</u>                | <u>9.7</u>                  | <u>34.6</u>                   | <u>8.9</u> |
| Total                         | 100.0                                  | 100.0                     | 100.0                       | 100.0                         | 100.0      |

\*Other: Listed in order of quantity of response--Quality of Teachers, Practicum, Systems Theory, Human Relations, Psychology, Problem Solving, Politics, Personnel Management, All of above.

Table 16  
Type of Experience by District Size

| Experience<br>Ranked<br>Order       | District Size of Current Superintendency |                           |                             |                               | Total<br>% |
|-------------------------------------|--|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|
|                                     | Less than<br>500 Pupils<br>%             | 500 to<br>999 Pupils<br>% | 1000 to<br>2999 Pupils<br>% | 3000 and<br>Above Pupils<br>% |            |
| 1) Ability to see the whole picture | 97.5                                     | 99.3                      | 100.0                       | 96.2                          | 98.5       |
| 2) High intelligence                | 80.0                                     | 75.2                      | 95.8                        | 88.5                          | 81.5       |
| 3) Secondary school administrative  | 74.4                                     | 87.6                      | 80.6                        | 73.1                          | 80.1       |
| 4) Secondary school teaching        | 69.4                                     | 72.4                      | 61.1                        | 65.4                          | 68.7       |
| 5) Elementary school administrative | 54.4                                     | 65.5                      | 52.8                        | 65.4                          | 58.8       |
| 6) Elementary school teaching       | 50.6                                     | 43.4                      | 44.4                        | 50.0                          | 46.9       |
| 7) Central office                   | 39.4                                     | 39.3                      | 37.5                        | 69.2                          | 40.9       |



respondents first full-time position in education was on the secondary level and 69.5 percent of the respondents first full-time position in education administration was as a principal.

### Stress

The subject of stress was in the spotlight during the 1970's and into the 1980's. Programs on stress have been featured in in-service education programs in most professions. In 1982, superintendents in the AASA nationwide study were asked whether they felt the superintendency was a stressful occupation.<sup>1</sup> The only conclusion reached from that data was that the superintendency is a stressful position. The same held true when Iowa superintendents were asked a similar question: How much stress do you feel is associated with the position of superintendent? They were asked to check: some, considerable, or very great. Iowa superintendents felt that the superintendency is a stressful position and 73.4 percent of the respondents checked "considerable" or "very great" stress and when "some stress" and "considerable" stress are combined, respondents returned an 85.3 percent total. According to enrollment categories, superintendents in the "less than 500" pupils category seemed to feel the pressure more strongly as 79.4 percent responded in the "considerable" and "very great"

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

columns. After that comparison there is little difference between categories of enrollment and again, about all one can say is that the superintendency is a stressful position here in Iowa as well as in the rest of the country. Table 17 indicates the results pertaining to Question 20.

### Future Plans

Question 23 on the questionnaire asked the respondents to indicate their future plans by checking the alternative which reflected their current thinking. There were four alternatives listed:

1. I plan to definitely stay in education as a superintendent in this or another district until retirement.
2. I plan to continue on as a superintendent in this or another district until the minimum retirement age in Iowa.
3. I will (probably) leave if I find another position outside education that interests me.
4. I will (probably) leave when I find a desirable position at a junior college, college or university.

The alternatives were similarly offered in the 1971 and 1982 AASA nationwide surveys.

With the negative publicity that education has received in recent years, it apparently has not become so unbearable that its chief executives are planning to withdraw from the profession. The survey revealed that 58.7 percent of the Iowa school superintendents plan to stay on as superintendents until they retire and 24.5 percent of

Table 17

Size of District by Stress Associated with the Position of Superintendent

| District Size         | Some Stress |             | Considerable Stress |             | Very Great Stress |             | Totals    |              |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|
|                       | No.         | %           | No.                 | %           | No.               | %           | No.       | %            |
| Less than 500 Pupils  | 33          | 20.6        | 103                 | 64.4        | 24                | 15.0        | 160       | 100.0        |
| 500 to 999 Pupils     | 45          | 31.0        | 79                  | 54.5        | 21                | 14.5        | 145       | 100.0        |
| 1000 to 2999 Pupils   | 19          | 26.4        | 42                  | 58.3        | 11                | 15.3        | 72        | 100.0        |
| 3000 and Above Pupils | <u>10</u>   | <u>38.5</u> | <u>13</u>           | <u>50.0</u> | <u>3</u>          | <u>11.5</u> | <u>26</u> | <u>100.0</u> |
| Totals                | 107         | 26.5        | 237                 | 58.8        | 59                | 14.6        | 403       | 100.0        |

them plan to continue on as superintendent until the minimum retirement age in Iowa. These indicators can be compared with the 1982 nationwide response of 49.9 percent and 21.4 percent respectively for the same questions. Only 2.9 percent of the respondents would (probably) leave for a position in a junior college, college or university and 13.9 percent would (probably) leave for a position outside education they found desirable.

When comparing the data from this question with enrollment categories, the only noticeable difference in percentages and categories is in the "1,000 to 2,999" student sized districts where 69.5 percent of the superintendents would stay on as superintendents until retirement and 23.6 percent until the minimum retirement age in Iowa but only 6.9 percent would leave for a position outside education and none in this enrollment size category would leave for a position in a junior college, college or university. Table 18 summarizes the data for these future plans.

#### Political Preference

To help build a complete profile of the superintendency in the state of Iowa, a question was added to the survey to have the respondents indicate their political preference as either: Republican, Democrat, Independent, or other. It may be argued that the political party system in Iowa indicates a difference in attitude as perhaps liberal, conservative and so forth. The Republican party

Table 18  
Future Plans by District Size

| Plans   | Percentage of Responses by District Size |                           |                             |                               | Totals<br>% |
|---|--|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------|
|   | Less than<br>500 Pupils<br>%             | 500 to<br>999 Pupils<br>% | 1000 to<br>2999 Pupils<br>% | 3000 and<br>Above Pupils<br>% |             |
| Stay on as a superintendent until retirement                          | 50.0                                     | 60.7                      | 69.5                        | 61.5                          | 58.7        |
| Continue as a superintendent until the minimum retirement age in Iowa | 26.3                                     | 24.8                      | 23.6                        | 23.1                          | 24.5        |
| Probably leave for a position outside education                       | 21.2                                     | 10.4                      | 6.9                         | 7.7                           | 13.9        |
| Probably leave for junior college, college, or university position    | <u>2.5</u>                               | <u>4.1</u>                | <u>0.0</u>                  | <u>7.7</u>                    | <u>2.9</u>  |
| Totals  | 100.0                                    | 100.0                     | 100.0                       | 100.0                         | 100.0       |

is noted for its conservative political attitude, the Democratic party would have a more liberal attitude, the Independent party could serve several categories of attitudes and "other" might include such groups as the Socialist or the Communist party.

The majority of the Iowa superintendents, 54.1 percent, indicated they had a preference for the Republican party, 21.6 percent checked the Democratic party, 23.8 percent checked Independent and 0.5 percent indicated they preferred some other party. This other party preference was checked by those superintendents in the enrollment category of "less than 500" students. While the superintendents of most of the enrollment categories indicated that more than one-half of the respondents were Republican, the superintendents in the "3,000 and above" pupil districts split with more than 50 percent indicating a preference for the Democratic or Independent parties rather than the Republican party. Table 19 shows the results of this question tabulated. Conversations with superintendents about this matter indicated that party participation, identification and membership are subject to change over time, vary according to local, state or national elections and do not necessarily reflect voting behavior. Consequently, these data must be considered as indicative only of general political preference. The AASA national survey in 1982 showed that on a national scale superintendents tended to

prefer the Republican party.

Table 19  
Political Preference by District Size

| Party Preference | Percentage of Responses by District Size |                     |                       |                         | Total %    |
|------------------|--|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------|
|                  | Less than 500 Pupils %                   | 500 to 999 Pupils % | 1000 to 2999 Pupils % | 3000 and Above Pupils % |            |
| Republican       | 53.1                                     | 54.5                | 58.3                  | 46.2                    | 54.1       |
| Democrat         | 23.7                                     | 21.4                | 19.5                  | 15.4                    | 21.6       |
| Independent      | 21.9                                     | 24.1                | 22.2                  | 38.4                    | 23.8       |
| Other            | <u>1.3</u>                               | <u>0.0</u>          | <u>0.0</u>            | <u>0.0</u>              | <u>0.5</u> |
| Total            | 100.0                                    | 100.0               | 100.0                 | 100.0                   | 100.0      |

### Salaries

The responses to Question 23 required the superintendents to check the category that fit their present salary for the 1982-83 school year. There were no surprises as the salaries rose as the size of the district increased. Salaries attract the interest of superintendents and board members. On a national scale the average salary increased \$150 between 1923 and 1933, while the average salary increased by more than \$14,000, without controlling for inflation, between 1971 and 1982.<sup>1</sup> The data from this study, as reported in Table 20, indicate the largest percentage of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

Iowa superintendents fell in the category between \$36,000 and \$40,999. This is somewhat higher than the national figure on the AASA 1982 survey of \$31,665.

Table 20  
Current Salaries by District Size

| Salary Responses   | District Size          |                     |                       |                         | Total % |
|--------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------|
|                    | Less than 500 Pupils % | 500 to 999 Pupils % | 1000 to 2999 Pupils % | 3000 and Above Pupils % |         |
| \$20,000-\$25,999  | 0.6                    | --                  | --                    | --                      | 0.25    |
| \$26,000-30,999    | 18.2                   | --                  | --                    | --                      | 7.3     |
| \$31,000-35,999    | 56.2                   | 15.9                | --                    | --                      | 28.0    |
| \$36,000-40,999    | 21.9                   | 67.6                | 11.1                  | --                      | 34.9    |
| \$41,000-45,999    | 2.5                    | 16.5                | 73.6                  | 3.8                     | 20.3    |
| \$46,000-50,999    | 0.6                    | --                  | 12.5                  | 15.4                    | 3.5     |
| \$51,000 and above | --                     | --                  | 2.8                   | 80.8                    | 5.75    |
| Total              | 100.0                  | 100.0               | 100.0                 | 100.0                   | 100.0   |

#### Issues Facing the Superintendent

The respondents rated twelve different issues facing the superintendency in their own school districts. The superintendents evaluated the significance of the issue to their school districts according to the following scale: of great importance, importance, and of limited or of no importance.

The twelve issues were similar to those that



superintendents nationwide were asked to rank in the AASA study of 1982.<sup>1</sup> Table 21 indicates the way in which the state's chief school officers evaluated the issues facing their districts. Table 21 also ranks the various issues according to the percentage of superintendents rating them as either "of great importance" or "important." This table also divides the data by size of district of the respondent. To highlight the distribution, the highest three and lowest three ranked issues have their rank in parentheses.

While there is much variance among superintendents of different sized enrollments as to most of the ranked issues, the number one issue for all sized district superintendents (99 percent of all respondents) was Negotiations-Teacher Militancy. The next closest issue of importance in rank at number two (96 percent of all respondents) was Financing Schools. An interesting pattern emerges in that the superintendents of the largest category, "3,000 and above" student districts, agreed 100 percent on four of the issues as "of great importance" or "important." They checked Negotiations-Teacher Militancy, Financing Schools, Loss of Local Control to the State, and Teacher Training and Improvement in Preparation as issues they felt were in those two degree categories. The issues receiving the least number of checks in those two categories were the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 38-39.

Table 21

Percentage Ranking of Issues of "Great Importance" and "Important" According to District Size

| Issues  | District Size |         |         |          | Total %  |
|---|---------------|---------|---------|----------|----------|
|   | A(%)          | B(%)    | C(%)    | D(%)     |          |
| Negotiations-Teacher Militancy                  | 100.0(1)      | 97.9(1) | 98.6(1) | 100.0(1) | 99.0(1)  |
| Financing Schools                               | 98.1(2)       | 92.4    | 97.2(2) | 100.0(2) | 96.0(2)  |
| Increase in Public Accountability in Education  | 92.5          | 97.2(3) | 97.2(3) | 96.2     | 95.7(3)  |
| Rapidly Decreasing Enrollments                  | 95.0(3)       | 93.1    | 90.3    | 88.5     | 93.1(4)  |
| Caliber of Board Members                        | 88.1          | 97.9(2) | 91.7    | 96.2     | 92.8(5)  |
| Loss of Local Control to State                  | 92.5          | 92.4    | 91.7    | 100.0(2) | 92.8(5)  |
| Teacher Training and Preparation                | 93.7          | 95.2    | 83.3    | 100.0(2) | 92.8(5)  |
| Student Discipline Problems                     | 86.3          | 86.2    | 81.9    | 80.8     | 85.1(6)  |
| Greater Visibility of Superintendent's Position | 83.1          | 79.3    | 80.6    | 80.8     | 81.1(7)  |
| Use of Drugs and Alcohol by Students            | 80.6          | 71.7    | 90.3    | 80.8     | 79.2(8)  |
| Federal Involvement in Education                | 61.9          | 64.1    | 62.5    | 84.6     | 64.3(9)  |
| Reorganization to Smaller Districts             | 66.2          | 62.8    | 50.0    | 61.5     | 61.8(10) |
| Other   | 10.0          | 6.2     | 15.3    | 11.5     | 9.7(11)  |

District Size Categories: A = Less than 500; B = 500 to 999; C = 1,000 to 2,999; D = 3,000 and Above.

last three: Federal Involvement in Education, Reorganization to Smaller Schools, and Other, which included "curricular reform" and "all of the above" as the most frequently submitted phrases under this item.

Both the superintendents of Iowa on this survey and the superintendents on the AASA survey in 1982 agreed on one issue in the top three. That issue was the concern for Financing Schools. Both groups agreed that the Use of Drugs and Alcohol by Students was an issue on the wane. This issue was the last in rank order on the AASA survey and the ninth on this survey.<sup>1</sup>

At the fifth ranked position, each was tied by three issues: Caliber of Board Members, Loss of Local Control to the State, and Teacher Training and Preparation. Ninety-two and eight-tenths percent of the respondents felt Caliber of Board Members, Loss of Local Control to the State and Teacher Training and Preparation were of "great importance" or "important." As indicated in Table 21, the largest size category (D) placed emphasis of at least 75 percent or better on all issues except the final two, Reorganization and Other. One statement made by the superintendents on the issue "Greater Visibility of the Superintendent's Position" is that they felt it is indeed important for the superintendent to be available and known in his district.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

The following two tables are presented here to present a visual summary of the data used in this comparison study.

Table 22

## Selected Comparisons: Personal Characteristics

| Characteristics  | AASA 1982<br>Study | 1983 Iowa<br>Profile |
|--|--------------------|----------------------|
| Age  | 48 (mean)          | 49 (mean)            |
| Sex  | 98.8% Male         | 98.86% Male          |
| Age: First Job in Education                                | 24 (mean)          | 23 (mean)            |
| Highest Degree Earned:                                     |                    |                      |
| M.A.   | 48.0%              | 25.5%                |
| Ed.S.  | 17.1%              | 55.6%                |
| Doctorate  | 28.0%              | 18.9%                |
| Age: First Full-Time<br>Administration Job in<br>Education | NA                 | 29.0 (mean)          |

NA = Information not available on that survey.

Table 23

## Selected Comparisons: Professional Characteristics

| Characteristics                                | AASA 1982 Study                                  | 1983 Iowa Profile                                    |
|--|--|--|
| First Full-Time Position in Education          | NA   | Secondary 87.8%                                      |
| Type: First Administrative Position            | 1) Principal 55.7%<br>2) Asstant Principal 18.9% | 1) Principal 69.6%<br>2) Superintendent 15.9%        |
| Age: First Superintendency                     | 35.2 (mean)                                      | 36 (mean)  |
| Size: First Superintendency                    | NA   | 1,308 (mean)   |
| Number of Districts Served                     | NA   | 2.27 (mean)  |
| Years as Superintendent                        | NA   | 13 (mean)  |
| Different States Served as Superintendent      | NA   | 1.3 (mean)   |
| Years in Present Superintendency               | NA   | 8.2 (mean)   |
| Length of Present Contract                     | NA   | 1 Year = 49.8%<br>2 Years = 12.9%<br>3 Years = 37.2% |
| Would Choose Superintendency as a Career Again | 50.1%  | 81.4%  |

Table 23 (continued)

| Characteristics                                   | AASA 1982 Study   | 1983 Iowa Profile   |
|---|---|---|
| Evaluation of Graduate Programs<br>Excellent/Good | 72.8%   | 70.0%   |
| Preparation: Areas of Importance                  | 1) Human Relations Skills = 46.4%<br>2) Finance = 45.9% | Public Relations = 39.5%<br>Finance = 28.8%                                 |
| Experience: Areas of Importance                   | NA  | 1) Ability to see the Whole Picture = 98.5%<br>2) High Intelligence = 81.6% |
| Stress (Considerable/Very Great)                  | 47.0%   | 73.4%   |
| Future Plans - Stay on Until Retirement           | 71.3%   | 83.2%   |
| Political Preference:                             |   |   |
| Republican  | 35.2%   | 54.1%   |
| Democrat  | 30.9%   | 21.6%   |
| Salaries  | \$31,665.00 (median)                                    | \$36,000.00 to \$40,999.00  |
| Issues of Importance                              | 1) Finance-Schools<br>2) Planning & Goal Setting        | 1) Negotiations-Teacher Militancy<br>2) Financing Schools                   |

NA = Not Available from that survey

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Summary, Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

#### Summary

The purpose of this study was to compare a profile of the Iowa public school superintendent with that of the American Association of School Administrator's (AASA) national study of the superintendency. This state of the superintendency was measured as of spring, 1983.

The data were gathered by means of a survey instrument modeled after that used in previous studies conducted by the AASA. The questionnaire was refined and adopted for use after review by experts in the field of education administration.

The survey instrument was mailed to the superintendents of all 441 public school systems in the state of Iowa. A follow-up reminder was inserted in the Iowa Association of School Administrators newsletter one month after the questionnaire had been distributed to encourage participation and helped to develop the large representative sample used to produce a profile of the public school superintendent in the state of Iowa. The completed surveys were received from 403 superintendents with three spoiled surveys for a total of 406 and a rate of return of 92.1 percent. The

questionnaires were analyzed and classified by school district size: Less than 500 students, 500 to 999 students, 1,000 to 2,999 students and 3,000 and above students.

After analyzing the responses of 403 superintendents of public schools in the state of Iowa, the results were compared with the data collected in the 1982 AASA nationwide survey. The "typical" Iowa superintendent was similar in many respects to his/her counterpart on the national survey. Iowa's chief school officer was a male, forty-nine years of age, held a Specialist degree from an Iowa university, began his/her teaching at the secondary level (7-12), and moved into an administrative position at age twenty-nine, most likely to a principalship. Nationwide, in 1982, the school superintendent was a year younger at forty-eight, male, less educated than Iowa superintendents with at least a Masters degree and entered the superintendency from the principalship.

The average superintendent in Iowa accepted his/her first superintendency at the age of thirty-six, ten months older than the AASA survey superintendent. The mean enrollment of that first district in Iowa was 1,308 students. The Iowa superintendent has served in two different districts in 1.3 different states over a period of 13.4 years and has been in his/her current assignment 8.2 years (mean) with a contract at the current time for one year. Information was not available on the AASA study for comparison of those areas



but were included in this study to develop a complete profile of Iowa superintendents.

Reflections by the superintendents covered many areas, the chief among them being that they would choose the superintendency again as a career: Iowa superintendents (81.4 percent) agreed with their counterparts (50.1 percent) and indicated that they would. Iowa superintendents, 39.5 percent, agreed that the most important area of "preparation" for the superintendency was public relations while 98.5 percent felt that the most important area of "experience for preparation" to the superintendency is the "ability to see the whole picture" and second in importance here was "high intelligence." On the AASA survey, superintendents were asked to name two of the primary expectations board members held for them and 46.5 percent checked human relation skills and 45.2 percent checked financial knowledge. The similarity here is that superintendents are working under a personal perception of what needs to be a concern according to their employers and what background the superintendents felt were necessary to meet the demands of the job.

Both the Iowa superintendent and his/her counterpart on the AASA study had a political party preference for the Republican party. The Iowa school officer seemed to fare better financially as the nationwide study indicated a median salary of \$31,665.00 while Iowa superintendents

checked the category of \$36,000.00 to \$40,999.00.

In his job, today's superintendent, both in Iowa and nationwide, viewed the superintendency as a stressful occupation and mentioned several crucial issues, namely, negotiations-teacher militancy and financing of schools as pressure-bearing areas. These areas of concern seem to permeate all schools of every size. In spite of all this, both groups were positive about their graduate preparation as well as the superintendency, and many plan to stay on in that position until retirement.

### Conclusions

In Chapter One, it was stated that it was important to know the personal and professional characteristics of Iowa's school superintendents and to see what relationships existed between those characteristics and the characteristics of those superintendents surveyed nationwide by AASA in 1982. These relationships are shown as part of the conclusions developed from this study.

In general, the Iowa superintendency reflects a strong similarity to that of its counterpart nationwide in personal and professional characteristics according to the comparisons found in Chapter Four between this study and the current AASA survey. The similarities are especially strong in age, sex, background/experience, and personal/professional concerns. The close similarities suggest that the superintendents nationwide, as surveyed on the 1982 AASA profile

study, are quite similar professionally and personally to Iowa's superintendents.

The mean age of superintendents in the nationwide survey was one year less than the mean age of forty-nine found in this study. There was very little significant difference when the data were analyzed by size of school district in either study.

The superintendency is almost exclusively a male profession, with only four female respondents in this survey. An almost identical percentage of female respondents returned the AASA survey.

As a group, the Iowa superintendents accepted their first full-time position in education at a mean age of twenty-three. The first position was, and is, most likely to be that of a teacher at the secondary level, grades seven through twelve. There was no reference to this question on the AASA survey.

Nationwide, the larger the school district employing the superintendent, the younger the superintendent probably was when he/she accepted his/her first administrative position. This was not necessarily true in this study as Iowa superintendents of school districts with 3,000 or more students and those in districts with 500 to 999 students were appointed to their initial position in administration earlier than were chief executives of the other two size units.

A superintendent more than likely began his/her administrative career at the building level, primarily as a principal, but occasionally as an assistant principal as was indicated on both studies. This appointment tended to take place around the age of twenty-nine in Iowa, although superintendents of districts of 500 to 999 students and 3,000 and above students usually began their administrative careers earlier than that.

The average Iowa superintendent came to his/her first superintendency at age thirty-six, with 88 percent having been appointed by the age of forty-two. Nationwide in 1982, the average superintendent accepted his/her first district responsibility at age 35.2. The larger the enrollment of the superintendent's current district, the larger, in enrollment, his/her initial superintendency tended to be.

Nationwide, boards of education of large districts were more likely to employ superintendents with out-of-state experience than were boards of systems of lesser size. However, the overwhelming majority of Iowa superintendents served only in Iowa as most were "chief officers" of three or fewer school districts, with the majority of them in either one or two districts.

The AASA study did not cover areas such as length of contract, years in present job, nor total years as a superintendent. To obtain data relative to the mobility of Iowa superintendents, such questions were placed on this survey.

While the mean number of years spent in their present superintendency was 8.2, there was a difference related to the size of the district. Superintendents of districts of 500 to 999 students had been in their current assignments almost a year more than superintendents of other districts. Statewide, the mean number of years of total experience of the superintendents was 13.4. Superintendents in Iowa typically have the security of either a one-, two- or three-year contract. Generally, the three-year contract was held by less than half of the superintendents.

As expected, in both studies, the salary contracted by the superintendents strongly relates to the student enrollment of the district.

Another area of close similarity with the AASA study is that of job satisfaction. It can be concluded that Iowa superintendents felt positively toward their work in that over three-fourths of the group indicated they would again choose the superintendency as a career. This is reinforced by the findings that show a strong majority of superintendents from both studies planned to stay in the superintendency until their retirement.

One noted difference between the two surveys was in the type of degree prevalent among superintendents. On the nationwide survey, the majority of those surveyed had at least a Masters degree while in Iowa, the Specialist degree proved to be a prerequisite for the job, with the

degree invariably taken in educational administration from a university located within the state. At the same time, the doctorate was becoming more prevalent and is the rule, rather than the exception in districts with 3,000 or more pupils, both in Iowa and nationwide.

Superintendents in both studies generally felt positive about the quality of their graduate studies, with the highest rated areas of preparation being public relations and school finance.

The two most significant issues faced by superintendents in districts of every size in Iowa were problems in staff relations, including teacher militancy and collective bargaining, and inadequate financing of schools. The AASA study indicated similar concerns with the majority of superintendents nationwide checking financing as the greatest concern. While there are a number of issues common to districts of all sizes, superintendents of larger school systems (3,000 or more students) are particularly concerned with the problems surrounding the loss of local control to the state and inadequate teacher training and preparation.

Although party participation, identification and membership are subject to change over time, vary according to local, state or national elections and do not necessarily reflect voting behavior, both studies showed the greatest number of respondents indicating their political preference to be that of the Republican party.

### Implications and Recommendations

Collectively, the two studies are a profile of the Iowa and American public school superintendent and a commentary upon the superintendency. At the outset of this study, the importance of learning more about the people who serve as spokesmen and directors of education in the communities of Iowa was established. Also stressed was the necessity of developing information that would aid Iowa's public school superintendents in the appraisal of their own preparation, career pattern, opinions, and professional characteristics. In addition, it was hoped that the results of the study would assist aspiring superintendents to review their professional preparation and projected career patterns. As a result of the data generated, among others, the following implications in light of the study's stated purposes and potential uses were offered.

1. The superintendency still is almost exclusively a male profession. In spite of strong federal and state efforts to guarantee equal opportunities for women, only four of the 403 respondents, 0.99 percent, were females. In fact, this ratio is similar to that found nationwide in 1982 when women held 1.1 percent of the school superintendencies nationwide. It is difficult to believe that women do not have the personal characteristics, professional preparation and aspirations to assume the top administrative educational leadership roles in Iowa. Rather, it might be

suggested that role stereotyping and subtle, even subconscious, discrimination may be a more realistic explanation of the obvious scarcity of female school superintendents in Iowa's rural community districts which comprise the majority of the school systems in the state.

Regardless of the reasons, changes in this area should and will undoubtedly be forthcoming in the future. The job of a superintendent of schools is too vital to perpetuate a system which seems to prepare and consider only the male segment of the population.

2. The most common career pattern among superintendents involved movement from a teaching position to building level administration, either principal, most frequently, or assistant principal. This has implications for the individual entering public education with the goal of becoming a superintendent of schools. It is probable that it is more than coincidence that so many of Iowa's school superintendents had experience as a building principal. Not only does that administrative post provide an opportunity for school management experience, but it also gives top level administrators a chance to observe an individual's management skills and potential in a challenging, yet limited setting. With an increased emphasis on team management, principals are not only affecting districtwide decisions more, they are also gaining more exposure. Consequently, it can be presumed that the principalship will



continue to be a significant step on the way to a superintendency.

3. As already related, the majority of superintendents worked under either a one-, two- or three-year contractual agreement with their boards of education. This security takes on added significance when one recalls that the superintendents listed staff relations, including collective bargaining and teacher militancy, and financing of schools as both the most significant issues facing their districts and the biggest obstacles to improving their own effectiveness. The reason for the added significance is that both of these situations are greatly affected by outside forces: the state legislature and local voters. If the state fails to provide adequate funding and local voters do not approve operating millage increases, the superintendents' major problems will remain.

In addition, the Iowa Legislature authorized collective bargaining in the public sector in the 1970's and still has the power to modify the format. The Iowa School Education Association is an outside force that influences the labor relations situation beyond the control of the superintendent. Finally, the active interest in local elections taken by organized labor and other interest groups can quickly change the membership of a local board of education, the body that employs the superintendent.

4. The study showed that the Specialist degree is, in

effect, now a requirement for the superintendency and the Doctorate is prevalent in larger school districts. Those who aspire to fill that role must be aware of this and make plans to secure a doctoral degree in school administration. Thus, it is wise to begin graduate work as soon as possible following entry into the profession to gain experience and position early.

5. In the introduction, it was suggested that the study would provide information that could assist colleges and universities in the analysis of their current preparatory programs for school administrators. This should be possible in light of the data generated.

Superintendents rated their graduate studies quite highly. They also were concerned about the issues in public relations and school finance as well as personnel administration and business management. It might be appropriate for universities to consider whether they are offering those type of programs and, if so, whether they have an elective or required status in an individual's graduate program.

6. While staff relations and school financing were the two most pervasive issues identified by the superintendents, mention should again be made of the other issues and the implications they have for education in Iowa. The superintendents' concerns about the caliber of people elected to local boards of education, the types of responsibilities assigned to or removed from local boards of education,

growing federal involvement in education and rapidly decreasing enrollments all indicate the potential for more changes in education in the future.

Again it should be indicated that these are areas of concern to which superintendents must respond. In addition, many of them are frequently interrelated, such as questions of local control, growing state involvement and teacher preparation and training. Because of the difference in issues from district to district, further study and analysis in this area would prove beneficial.

7. Perhaps one of the significant implications is that in spite of the many problems and obstacles to greater personal effectiveness, the school superintendency provides sufficient challenge, excitement, satisfaction and financial reward to hold the majority of those who currently fill the position. Regardless of the pressures and stress normally associated with the job, the study indicated that the respondents were not sorry they had chosen the field they had and planned to remain in the position until retirement.

#### Reflections

Reflecting upon the conclusions, implications, and recommendations of the study, the researcher strongly believes that the study should be repeated on a regular basis, with the interval between studies not greater than five years. Only through this approach can trends and changes in Iowa's public school superintendency, and those who

occupy it, be discerned.

Further study could also provide answers as to why superintendents of districts enrolling 3,000 or more students often responded to survey questions differently than did their counterparts in other enrollment categories. However, to find those answers, additional research might very well have to include the school districts themselves and the boards of education that govern them.

It is also felt that the opinions and evaluations of the superintendents regarding issues of concern and preparation cannot be disregarded. While graduate programs generally received favorable ratings, there was some variance as to the superintendents' perceptions of the quality and importance of these programs. In light of the responses, universities should give strong consideration to either requiring or, when appropriate, recommending the inclusion of such coursework as related to public relations, personnel administration, and school business management in graduate programs in school administration. If these and other highly ranked coursework areas are not a mandatory part of an individual's course of study, that individual should at least be made aware of the value that practicing superintendents place on them. Any aspiring superintendent or university advisor should be cognizant of the type of preparation that superintendents in the field believe is important to success. For example, superintendents with

3,000 or more students placed more of a premium on "labor relations" than did the rest of their colleagues in the other sized districts. If one had aspirations to serve as a superintendent of a district of that size, university personnel should include that particular course work in that person's graduate program.

It is not surprising that in our present times of slow economic growth throughout the nation, inadequate financing of schools is a real concern of superintendents not only in Iowa, but nationwide. Iowa superintendents are perhaps cognizant of the relationship of politics and finance as they also felt public relations skills were a necessary preparatory area for their job. Under conditions of scarcity, cooperation and collaboration are more constructive than intensified competition. The superintendent's role in school financing has become a political role that requires certain public relation skills when dealing with the tax-conscious, more accountability-demanding public. Individuals who plan to make a career out of the superintendency must develop such skills if they are to succeed.

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## APPENDIX

## SUPERINTENDENT PROFILE QUESTIONNAIRE

### School District Data

(The following information identifying the district is for aid in assuring a broad sample and will not appear in any other compilation of the data.)

1) Present K-12 pupil enrollment of your district. \_\_\_\_\_

### Personal Characteristics

2) Age (your nearest birthday) \_\_\_\_\_

3) Sex: M \_\_\_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_

4) At what institution did you receive the following degrees and in what state was that institution located?

| <u>Degree</u> | <u>Institution</u> | <u>State</u> |
|---------------|--------------------|--------------|
| a) B.A.       | _____              | _____        |
| b) M.A.       | _____              | _____        |
| c) Ed.S.      | _____              | _____        |
| d) Doctorate  | _____              | _____        |

5) At what age were you employed in your first full-time job in education? \_\_\_\_\_

### Professional Characteristics

6) What type of school were you employed in during your first full-time job in education? Check one:

\_\_\_ a) Elementary \_\_\_ b) Secondary \_\_\_ c) Other

7) At what age did you begin your first full-time administrative position in education? \_\_\_\_\_

8) What type of administrative position of those listed below was your first? Check one:

\_\_\_ a) Assistant Principal  
\_\_\_ b) Principal  
\_\_\_ c) Supervisor

- ☐ d) Director  
☐ e) Assistant Superintendent  
☐ f) Superintendent  
☐ g) Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

- 9) At what age were you appointed to your first superintendency in the public school? \_\_\_\_\_
- 10) What was the total K-12 enrollment of the district in your first superintendency? \_\_\_\_\_
- 11) In how many school districts have you served as superintendent? \_\_\_\_\_
- 12) How many years in all have you been a superintendent? (Include present year as one): \_\_\_\_\_
- 13) In how many different states have you served as a superintendent? (Count current district as one): \_\_\_\_\_
- 14) How many years have you served in your present superintendency? (Count current year as one): \_\_\_\_\_
- 15) What is the length of your present contract? Check one: ☐ a) one year ☐ b) two years ☐ c) three years
- 16) If you had to do it all over again, would you choose the superintendency as a career? Yes ☐ No ☐
- 17) On the whole, how would you evaluate your administrative graduate preparation for the superintendency? Check one: ☐ a) Excellent ☐ b) Very Good ☐ c) Fair ☐ d) Poor
- 18) Which of the following areas of study do you feel is the most necessary for preparation to serve as a public school superintendent? Check one:
- ☐ a) Labor Relations  
☐ b) Finance  
☐ c) Business  
☐ d) Public Relations  
☐ e) Other \_\_\_\_\_

- 19) In your opinion, how important are the following areas as preparation for the superintendency? Mark each item according to the following scale:

A = Very Essential  
 B = Important  
 C = Some Small Importance  
 D = Unimportant

- \_\_\_ Elementary School Teaching Experience  
 \_\_\_ Elementary School Administrative Experience  
 \_\_\_ Secondary School Teaching Experience  
 \_\_\_ Secondary School Administrative Experience  
 \_\_\_ Central Office Experience  
 \_\_\_ High Intelligence  
 \_\_\_ Ability to See the Whole Picture

#### Professional Practices

- 20) How much stress do you feel is associated with the position of superintendent? Check one:

- \_\_\_ a) Some stress  
 \_\_\_ b) Considerable stress  
 \_\_\_ c) Very great stress

- 21) What are your future plans in the superintendency? Please check the one which indicates your current thinking:

- \_\_\_ a) I plan to definitely stay in education as a superintendent in this or another district until retirement.  
 \_\_\_ b) I plan to continue on as a superintendent in this or another district until the minimum retirement age in Iowa.  
 \_\_\_ c) I will (probably) leave if I find another position outside education that interests me.  
 \_\_\_ d) I will (probably) leave when I find a desirable position at a junior college, college, or university.

- 22) Please check your political preference:

- \_\_\_ Republican  
 \_\_\_ Democrat  
 \_\_\_ Independent  
 \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

- 23) What is your current salary? Please check the nearest category in which your current pay as full-time superintendent falls:

|                        |                           |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| ___ a) \$20,000-25,999 | ___ e) \$41,000-45,999    |
| ___ b) \$26,000-30,999 | ___ f) \$46,000-50,999    |
| ___ c) \$31,000-35,999 | ___ g) \$51,000 and above |
| ___ d) \$36,000-40,999 |                           |

- 24) What do you consider to be the major issues facing superintendents today? Below are some of these issues. Please rate each issue on the following scale:  
 A = Of great importance (place an "x" in column A)  
 B = Important (place an "x" in column B)  
 C = Limited or of no importance (place an "X" in column C)

| <u>A</u> | <u>B</u> | <u>C</u> |  |
|----------|----------|----------|--|
| ___      | ___      | ___      | a) Negotiations, teacher militancy                     |
| ___      | ___      | ___      | b) Student discipline problems                         |
| ___      | ___      | ___      | c) Reorganization of smaller into larger districts     |
| ___      | ___      | ___      | d) Financing schools                                   |
| ___      | ___      | ___      | e) Federal involvement in education                    |
| ___      | ___      | ___      | f) Caliber of persons elected to local school boards   |
| ___      | ___      | ___      | g) Loss of local control to state control of districts |
| ___      | ___      | ___      | h) Teacher training and preparation needs improvement  |
| ___      | ___      | ___      | i) Use of drugs or alcohol in schools by students      |
| ___      | ___      | ___      | j) Rapidly decreasing enrollments                      |
| ___      | ___      | ___      | k) Greater visibility of the superintendent's position |
| ___      | ___      | ___      | l) Increasing public accountability towards education  |
| ___      | ___      | ___      | m) Other (please indicate) _____                       |